

# OUTREACH AND ADVOCATE EXCHANGE

## SOUTH CAROLINA ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE South Carolina Crime Victim Services Division



**Second Quarter  
October - December 2020**

### Goodbye 2020, and Good Riddance!

By Director Burke Fitzpatrick

As you read this, 2020 is fast coming to an end and New Year celebrations are right around the corner. Good riddance. For many, 2020 was Annus Horribilis. For all in the victim services provider community it has been a long, difficult challenge. The social distancing from victims in every community, the disruptions to shelters and other vital agencies, the isolation of victims of crime themselves - never have we all been faced with problems like these.

But at the same time, the victim service provider community has been inspiring. We've seen victim advocates and other providers invent creative workarounds, adapt to the starts and stops of the criminal justice system and sometimes even put their own health at risk, and that of their families, to meet directly with victims when it was critical to do so.

You have certainly inspired us. Speaking for everyone in all four departments in the Crime Victim Services Division, we have seen and experienced your determination and resiliency from one end of the state to the other. It has been a privilege to serve you through our Compensation, Grants, Training and Ombudsman's departments.

Our division, and the entire Attorney General's Office, approach the next year with much optimism, particularly with Coronavirus vaccinations on the horizon for distribution. Certainly sometime next year we can finally figure out what the "new normal" is going to look like. Whatever that picture is, the strong foundations of victim's rights and services will remain intact in South Carolina.

Currently, we are keeping a close eye on federal grant funding to the states, particularly the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) program. The Congress, bless their hearts, has not yet passed a budget and the House and Senate appropriation versions are far apart. One would maintain awards at their current (low) levels of funding and one would further severely reduce awards - not just cutting to the bone, but cutting into the bone.

By the time this article gets to your email inbox the federal budget may be settled. In the meantime, we know that the non-profit community on the state and national levels are making their voices heard

in Washington. We're doing our part here too. Attorney General Alan Wilson has joined with all other State Attorneys General in calling for the restoration of funding to the federal Victims of Crime Trust Fund which supports not only the VOCA program, but also the Violence Against Women Act program and state Victim Compensation programs.

However our funding picture looks for programs starting in October 2021, we pledge to work in partnership with you on how to best deliver services to victims of crime. I and all my staff welcome your input. You can always reach me at [Bfitzpatrick@scag.gov](mailto:Bfitzpatrick@scag.gov) or at 803-917-1439.

So, on behalf of everyone with the Crime Victim Services Division in the Office of the Attorney General, I wish you all a healthy and happy New Year. We miss seeing you in person. Zoom just doesn't cut it.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

##### January:

National Blood Donor Month

National Glaucoma Awareness Month

##### February:

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Congenital Heart Defect Awareness

##### March:

Multiple Sclerosis Education & Awareness Month

National Kidney Awareness Month

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[http://  
www.redcross.org/](http://www.redcross.org/)

### **National Blood Donor Month**

#### **You Can Make a Difference**

National Blood Donor Month recognizes the lifesaving contribution of blood and platelet donors.

The American Red Cross was founded in 1881 by Clara Barton and is the United States premier emergency response organization. The American Red Cross is part of a worldwide organization which offers neutral humanitarian care to the victims of war.

In the United States around 4 million people give blood to the Red Cross, making this organization the largest supplier of blood and products in the country.

The American Red Cross is not funded by the government. They rely on donations of time, money and blood to keep the organization running.



## **Having A Bad Day?**

Deputy Director Veronica Swain Kunz

Crime Victim Ombudsman

### **Having a Bad Day?**

Yup. Yes, today has not been the best. Woke up cranky, car broke down, heater's acting up. My shoulder aches from typing all day in a chair that's not working for me. My home hair-dye job is a greenish shade of blonde and my best friend just moved to Florida. I've been better. Oh, I almost forgot: we're dealing with that "minor problem" of living with a seemingly never-ending global crisis. AND, why don't we top it all off with our *EXTREMELY* stressful jobs! I don't know about you, but it's very easy to *snap* these days. Thankfully, I read this article by Kelsey Orrensen. She asked therapists to share the tips that help *them* feel a little better when they're having a bad day. Here's what they do when they're down, and I'm going to try some of these ideas today:

#### **Take a shower to press the reset button**

"When I'm having a bad day, I don't feel like doing anything. And then — surprise — lying on the couch and withdrawing from the world makes my day worse. Taking a shower is my way to reset. After, it revitalizes me so I have the energy to rescue my day."

#### **Tell someone else how they're feeling**

"I share how I'm feeling and what's causing me to feel this way to either a friend or loved one. Letting out how I'm feeling and what I'm thinking helps me to feel better. Instead of me carrying the weight of what I am feeling alone, externalizing it and sharing it with someone else takes some of the weight off."

### **Log off Social Media**

"When I'm having a bad day, the last thing I need is more negativity. So I intentionally stay away from social media and the news, which can be pretty negative and sensationalized — neither of which I need after a tough day. It's easy to overwhelm ourselves with things we have no control over. So on hard days, I narrow my exposure and focus to what I can control."

### **Practice Self-Care**

"I allow myself to enjoy some time for me *without feeling guilty*. For example: taking a YouTube yoga class, watching a movie, losing myself in a book or simply doing nothing. Recharging is important for all of us in order to replenish energy and continue going."

### **Get Outside**

"Going outside and taking a walk has such an impact on my mood. It's incredible the mood-boosting powers that sunshine and movement have. The change in scenery can also promote a change in mindset and mood."

### **Find something that will stop the catastrophizing**

"When I have a bad day, I try not to catastrophize. Just because the morning was rough doesn't mean the day will be rough; just because today is going bad doesn't mean my life is bad. What helps me more than just saying this to myself, though, is finding ways to access joy, and experiencing these truths more viscerally. I do that by spending a few minutes petting the dog."

### **Look through old texts that make them smile**

"I have a photo album on my cell phone of screenshots that make me feel good. When I get an email from a patient or co-worker, or text from a friend that makes me feel particularly good about myself, I will take a screenshot and save it to this album. If I am having a bad day, scrolling through this album tends to always boost my mood."

### **Meditate and Pray**

"I do this daily every morning, but I'll add it at the end of rough days as well. As therapists, we go through a lot of pain with people and we end up carrying it home too. Having a routine to unload it is crucial. When you walk alongside people as they fight cancer, contemplate suicide, suffer through trauma, fight in wars — all of which I've been through with patients — you really benefit from turning to a higher power."

### **This May be Helpful for Surviving Family Members of Homicide Victims:**

Fellow advocate **Dan Levey** in Arizona shared information about an inspiring podcast series about homicide victims and homicide family survivors. **Kelly Fraser** is a podcaster who gives a voice to the loved ones of murder victims. "We chat over the telephone to tell the story of your loved one's life, their childhood, what they enjoyed doing, your favorite memories."

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## Grants Department Holds Virtual Implementation Workshop

by Deputy Director BJ Nelson

### Department of Crime Victim Assistance Grants (DCVAG)

Last month, Department of Crime Victim Assistance Grants staff conducted its annual Implementation Workshop, which covered all aspects of the newly awarded 2020 grants. Approximately 150 subgrantees participated. For the first time, this workshop was held entirely virtually, with both a live streaming option as well as a recorded version on the AGO Grants website for those who were unable to attend. Due to COVID, in person contact is limited, but staff is working constantly via phone or internet to provide technical assistance to agencies.

During the upcoming year, the DCVAG will fund 140 unique projects across the state for a total awarded amount of \$35,296,837. These grants include projects at state agencies, law enforcement agencies, solicitor's offices, domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, child advocacy centers, child residential homes, and other victim service agencies that work to serve victims of violent crime. Combined, these projects will work to employ approximately 645 full-time and 127 part-time victim advocates that will support victims in their communities.

While the 2020 VOCA, VAWA, and SVAP grants began on October 1, staff is also focusing on preparations for the 2021 funding cycle. Under current plans, an announcement regarding availability of funds will be made in January with a virtual solicitation workshop scheduled for February 10. After this workshop, the 2021 application period will begin.



<https://www.glaucoma.org/news/glaucoma-awareness-month.php>

January is **National Glaucoma Awareness Month**, an important time to spread the word about this sight-stealing disease.

Currently, more than 3 million people in the United States have glaucoma. The National Eye Institute projects this number will reach 4.2 million by 2030, a 58 percent increase.

Glaucoma is called "the sneak thief of sight" since there are no symptoms and once vision is lost, it's permanent. As much as 40% of vision can be lost without a person noticing.

Glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible blindness.

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that gradually steal sight without warning. Although the most common forms primarily affect the middle-aged and the elderly, glaucoma can affect people of all ages.

Vision loss is caused by damage to the optic nerve. This nerve acts like an electric cable with over a million wires. It is responsible for carrying images from the eye to the brain. There is no cure for glaucoma - yet.

## VSP Certification: Reminders and Tips

by Deputy Director Kim Hamm

### Department of Crime Victim Services Training, Provider Certification, and Statistical Analysis (CVST)

Department of Crime Victim Services Training, Provider Certification, and Statistical Analysis (CVST)

The elves at CVST have been hard at work making sure we have training hours up-to-date for thousands of Victim Service Providers (VSPs) throughout the state. As we approach the end of 2020, please be sure you are aware of VSP annual training requirements so you stay on the "Nice List". Failure to meet minimal training standards revokes VSP certification: We don't want that for anyone! CVST staff are available to help if you have questions about your training status or the statuses of your staff.

#### VSP Training requirements:

New VSPs- must obtain certification training (specialized 15-hour course) within one year of their date of employment as a VSP.

Certified VSPs- once certified, must obtain 12 hours of approved continuing education each calendar year

VSP-HT- once certified, must obtain 12 hours of approved continuing education each calendar year

Notifiers/Support Staff- must obtain 2 hours of specialized

training every other calendar year.

**Here are some tips to get your VSP training hours in before 2020 comes to a close:**

***Did you know you can carry forward hours if you obtain more than the annual training requirement? Overachievers rejoice! VSPs can carry forward up to 12 hours of VSP credit to the subsequent calendar year.***

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[https://  
www.loveisrespect.org/  
teendvmonth/](https://www.loveisrespect.org/teendvmonth/)

### Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Every February across the United States, teens and those who support them join together for a national effort to raise awareness to teen dating violence. Dating violence is more common than many people think. One in three teens in the U.S. will experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse by someone they are in a relationship with before they become adults. And nearly half (43%) of college women report experiencing violent and abusive dating behaviors.

By joining together every February, we can spread awareness and stop dating abuse before it starts! Everyone has a part in ending dating abuse, even if that one thing seems small in the moment. Every step towards ending dating violence is an important one!

**LOVE  
IS NOT  
ABUSE**

## Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funding for Crime Victims

by Deputy Director D. Scott Beard

### Department of Crime Victim Compensation (DCVC)

How does the Federal *Victims of Crime Act*, also known as "VOCA" help provide funding for crime victims in need in South Carolina?

The U.S. Congress created the federal *Victims of Crime Act* in 1984 to provide victims certain rights in the federal justice system. In addition, it also provided a means of funding for victims in the various state justice systems. VOCA as it is known, provides that those who are convicted or plead guilty of a criminal act in federal court must pay a fine, fee, or penalty into the Crime Victim Fund. Each year this fund is split between compensation, which reimburses individual crime victim losses as determined by state law - and assistance, which funds victim advocacy programs throughout the state.

Compensation programs vary greatly state to state. South Carolina is one of the more active programs in the country. One of the reasons South Carolina is so robust is because of the unique law known as Act 141 which provides funds to provide the rights and services outlined in our Crime Victim Constitutional Amendment. Act 141 requires each municipality in the state to use funds collected locally to fund victim services. One of the key jobs of a victim advocate is to notify of, and assist victims with filling out and filing victim compensation applications. Therefore, since South Carolina has victim services in every municipality due to Act 141, the number of applications will be higher than a state without such a law.

Each state receives federal VOCA funds to support its victim compensation program. Currently each state receives a 60% match on the amount the compensation program pays out directly to victims. This does not include funds spent on salaries or overhead. Therefore, the more a state pays directly to victims in state funds, the more it receives back from the federal VOCA fund. This past year South Carolina was number 11 of all of the states in the amount of federal reimbursement even though the state ranks 23<sup>rd</sup> in population.

An effort is currently before Congress to increase the federal VOCA match to 75% of payouts to victims.



**CRIME VICTIM  
COMPENSATION**

## DCVC Community Outreach

By Assistant Deputy Director Ethel Douglas Ford

### Department of Crime Victim Compensation (DCVC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/stories/heartdefects.html>

Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week is observed each year during to promote awareness and education about congenital heart defects (CHDs). CHDs affect approximately one in 100 births every year in the United States and are the most common type of birth defect (1,2).

Heart defects are conditions that persons live with throughout their lives; an estimated 1 million children and 1.4 million adults in the United States were living with a CHD in 2010 (3). CDC's website, Stories: Living with Heart Defects, includes personal stories by persons affected by CHDs.

CDC works to track and research CHDs through many different efforts, including 1) working with state tracking programs to evaluate newborn screening for critical congenital heart defects;\* 2) funding state programs to track birth defects,† including CHDs; 3) funding several research centers‡ across the nation to help understand the causes of birth defects, including CHDs; and 4) launching projects focused on tracking persons with CHDs across the lifespan.

Although we are continuing to telework, DCVC is still working hard to educate and train victim service providers across the State of South Carolina regarding our crime victim compensation program, services and benefits.

During the 1st Quarter for this fiscal year (FY 20-21), please note the following:

#### DCVC Training and Publication Items Distributed:

**Training Events Conducted: 6**

**Participants Trained: 367**

**Publications Distributed: 61**

**(We are teleworking and referring more advocates and service providers to our website for publication items due to COVID-19)**

When comparing the above information for this fiscal year to DCVC stats from this time last fiscal year FY19-20, please note the following:

**Training Events Conducted: 7**

**(One more training was conducted)**

**Participants Trained: 147**

**(220 less participants trained for this fiscal year)**

**Publications Distributed: 745**

**(685 more publication items distributed this fiscal year. We were not teleworking and was in the office daily and actually mailing out publication items to advocates and service providers)**

#### DCVC Law Enforcement and Advocate Training Initiative

In an effort to continue our training with law enforcement and advocates statewide, DCVC has coordinated with the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy and received continual approval for our hour and a half certification training with law enforcement. This is a training that introduces two videos that have been approved by the International Association of Chiefs of Police highlighting crime victim compensation.

As a result of this approval, DCVC emailed law enforcement agencies in 13 of the 16 circuits inquiring about their ability and interest in participating in our training initiative. Out of the 118 emails distributed, 5 law enforcement agencies responded that they were interested and had the capability to participate in virtual training. DCVC will coordinate with those agencies and schedule a law enforcement basic compensation presentation. If you are interested and wish to reach out to our agency regarding coordinating this event, please email our Outreach Coordinator, Mrs. April Staten at [astaten@scag.gov](mailto:astaten@scag.gov)

**Please note: DCVC had already completed this training in 3 of the 16 circuits prior to COVID-19)**

#### DCVC Future Training

DCVC is currently working to reach out to funeral homes across the state regarding crime victim compensation training. Prior to COVID-19, DCVC had made contact with 19 funeral homes that were interested in our training. However, due to the pandemic, we had to cancel those that were scheduled. Therefore, we recently contacted those service providers again, and out of the 19 that were initially interested, 18 have stated they have the capability to participate via virtual training and are still interested in the training. Therefore, DCVC will coordinate a virtual training with those 18 funeral homes.

We are also currently continuing to update our funeral home database. Once we have updated the funeral home database, we will distribute a flyer requesting that if they are interested in a virtual training to please contact Mrs. April Staten.

**Additional training is currently being coordinated with service providers and advocates statewide**

- **March 17, 2021 - South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Center**





<https://www.healthline.com/health/multiple-sclerosis>  
[https://](https://www.nationalmssociety.org/Get-Involved/Raise-Awareness)

[www.nationalmssociety.org/Get-Involved/Raise-Awareness](https://www.nationalmssociety.org/Get-Involved/Raise-Awareness)

### Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month

Every day, people living with MS do whatever it takes to move their lives forward despite the challenges. Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic illness involving your central nervous system (CNS). The immune system attacks myelin, which is the protective layer around nerve fibers. This causes inflammation and scar tissue, or lesions. This can make it hard for your brain to send signals to the rest of your body.

Helping others better understand this complex and unpredictable disease is critical to fueling the progress that changes lives for people affected by MS and ultimately will end the disease forever.



## Having A Bad Day? Deputy Director Veronica Swain Kunz Crime Victim Ombudsman

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We then briefly discuss what tragedy took place and how it has devastated you and/or your family. Please contact me if you or a support group member would like to have their loved one remembered on *Mourning the Murdered* Podcast. For more information, contact Kelly at 438-926-9035, email [mourningthemurdered@gmail.com](mailto:mourningthemurdered@gmail.com) or send a message to [m.me/podcastmtmkelly](https://m.me/podcastmtmkelly).

**Listen to one of the episodes here:** <https://mourningthemurdered.podbean.com/e/episode-12-howard-levey>

### (New Resource to Explore a Different Perspective:

*The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims* has released the "Increasing Access to Healing Services and Just Outcomes for Older African American Survivors: A Toolkit for Enhancing Critical Knowledge and Informing Action within the Crime Victim Assistance Field" which, beyond the Toolkit, includes a wonderful webinar recording and many online resources, all of which are available at <https://reachingvictims.org/resource/increasing-access-toolkit/>

### Where are the Trauma-Focused Counselors/Therapists in Your Area?

All VSPs need to know where to find the best counselors to help survivors. The professionals listed on the website below have been specially trained to help crime victims. Bookmark Project Best on your home screen and encourage suffering people to reach out for qualified help! <https://medicine.musc.edu/departments/psychiatry/divisions-and-programs/divisions/ncvc/programs/project-best/professionals>

**Please note that DCVC does not endorse any list of therapists because the agency works with a diverse number of agencies statewide.**







### **National Kidney Awareness Month**

**<https://nationaldaycalendar.com/national-kidney-month-march/>**

March is National Kidney Month, a time when communities across the country raise awareness about kidney disease. During the month of March we are reminded to give our kidneys a check up. 1 in 3 Americans are at high risk for kidney disease because of diabetes, high blood pressure, or family history of kidney failure. On top of that, 30 million Americans already have kidney disease, and many of them are not aware of it because symptoms usually don't show until the disease has progressed.

Our kidneys are crucial for 3 main reasons. They regulate water, they remove waste and regulate minerals, and they produce hormones. Located in our lower back, these two hard-working organs also filter 200 liters of blood a day! Keeping our kidneys healthy is vital to a long and productive life.

## VSP Certification: Reminders and Tips

by Deputy Director Kim Hamm

### Department of Crime Victim Services Training, Provider Certification, and Statistical Analysis (CVST)

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***Did you know you can receive VSP hours for trainings that were not pre-approved through CVST?*** It's true! Submit a [Non-Accredited Certification Request \(NACR\) application](#) with applicable documentation to demonstrate appropriate training content, eligible training hours, and proof of attendance within 30 days after the training has concluded. NACRs are accepted for both in-person and web-based training with appropriate documentation.

***Did you know you can receive up to 6 hours of VSP credit annually for being a presenter at a CVST approved training?*** Note that presenters can only receive credit for each training one time per year. Presenters cannot receive credit for the same course presented more than once per year.

***Did you know we post approved VSP trainings (upon request) to our website?*** Please visit [cvst.scag.gov](http://cvst.scag.gov) to view upcoming training opportunities. You can also request your trainings to be posted while submitting your training [accreditation application](#).

If you need information about training or VSP hours, please contact us at [cvst@scag.gov](mailto:cvst@scag.gov). We are here to help!

To learn more about CVST, visit our website at [cvst.scag.gov](http://cvst.scag.gov).

We look forward to **seeing** you all in 2021.

**Happy New Year  
from CVST!**

**Certified  
PROFESSIONAL**



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***Merry Christmas and Happy New !***

